

ARCTIC SECURITY: COOPERATION OR COMPETITION BETWEEN RUSSIA AND USA

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INTRODUCTION

The Arctic has been the centre of the global climate change debate. The progressive melting of the Arctic ice has alarmed scientists, not only for the survival of the Arctic eco-system but also for the consequences it would have on weather patterns and ocean temperatures across the world. It needs to be understood that the near rapid melting of Arctic ice will have detrimental consequences for the socio-economic development of countries that are far from the region and have no understanding of the Arctic. According to report of the United Nations' Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change on global warming, the effects of a temperature overshoot are reversible for the Arctic sea ice cover on decadal time scales.¹ The Arctic Council, in its report titled Arctic Resilience Report (2016), has pointed out that

the Arctic is now changing at an unprecedented pace, on multiple levels, in ways that fundamentally affect both people and ecosystems.... The changes

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1. UN IPCC, "Global Warming of 1.5 Degree Celsius," <https://www.ipcc.ch/sr15/>. Accessed on February 19, 2019.

The global scientific community as well as political and business leaders are coming together to cooperate on ways and means to stop or decrease the pace of Arctic ice melting. However, national interests and mistrust somewhere delude certain countries from genuine cooperation. This aspect can be seen between Russia and the United States.

happening in the Arctic today are driven primarily by external factors. Climate change is the most pervasive and powerful driver of change, but many other environmental changes are taking place as well, alongside rapid social and economic developments. In some contexts, factors such as resource demand, transportation needs, migration, geopolitical changes and globalization are making the greatest impact on the Arctic. Indeed, many Arctic social-ecological systems face multiple stressors at once.... The reality is that changes across the Arctic are closely interconnected. The drivers of change—many of them external to the Arctic—cascade across geophysical, ecological and human elements of social-ecological systems.²

The complexity of the Arctic environment makes it difficult to monitor it and, more importantly, make forecasts. Knowledge about the Arctic needs to be shared by, and between, nations and the indigenous populations that reside there. To preserve the environment of the Arctic, knowledge has to not only pursue problems but also find solutions for them through an interdisciplinary approach. The global scientific community as well as political and business leaders are coming together to cooperate on ways and means to stop or decrease the pace of Arctic ice melting. However, national interests and mistrust somewhere delude the scientific community and political leaders of certain countries from genuine cooperation. This aspect can be seen between Russia and the United States.

The ice melting of the Arctic is seen as a geo-political and geo-economic opportunity, albeit for a few nations at the moment. It would allow for

2. Arctic Council, "Arctic Resilience Report," [ARR_full_report_low-res_161114b.pdf](#). Accessed on February 19, 2019.

the passage of container ships along the Northern Sea Route (NSR). As the global economy undergoes a transformation with technologies that are increasing production, all nations are looking for new markets and sources of raw material as well as new routes to reach both. It needs to be noted that the NSR is yet to become fully functional due to financial viability, lack of specialised ships and manpower expertise needed to navigate in the Arctic waters and other safety concerns. The exploration of minerals from the Arctic sea-bed is the other aspect

that countries that border the Arctic hope to exploit in the future, if and when it becomes economically viable. One has to also keep in mind the environmental fragility of the Arctic. It needs to be pointed out that the changing climate of the Arctic will lead to profound changes in the global climate, weather patterns and eco-systems. The disappearance of the older and thicker classes of sea ice is leaving an ice pack that is more vulnerable to melting in the summer, and liable to move unpredictably. This is a challenge not just for the exploration of minerals in the Arctic sea-bed but also for future navigation of ships in the region. The environmental impact is already being felt. The reduced sea ice coverage and early break-up of ice had a profound effect on primary ocean productivity in 2018, particularly in the Bering Sea region where productivity levels were sometimes 500 percent higher than normal levels. Warming Arctic Ocean conditions are also coinciding with an expansion of harmful algae species responsible for toxic algal blooms in the Arctic Ocean.³ All countries must share responsibility for the Arctic because activities pursued here have

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3. Arctic Programme, US Department of Commerce, "Arctic Report 2018," <https://www.arctic.noaa.gov/Report-Card/Report-Card-2018/ArtMID/7878/ArticleID/772/Executive-Summary>. Accessed on February 19, 2019.

influence/consequences elsewhere. The Arctic can accommodate very diverse pursuits, but only to the extent that they are either compatible, or else separated by enough time and distance for the region to recoup.⁴

Apart from its economic and environmental importance, the Arctic also has played an important role in the strategic arena. During World War II, the Arctic constituted a supply route for the allied forces. Supplies between the United States and Soviet Union were shipped through the Arctic as it was the shortest route between the two nations. During the war, some battles were also fought in some portions of the Arctic, with the German Navy blocking the Arctic routes in order to block supplies by ships to the allied nations, especially the United Kingdom. The end of the war raised the strategic and military importance of the Arctic, with the Cold War becoming a reality.

During the Cold War, the Arctic remained transformed into a political and strategic region for both power blocs, the United States and the Soviet Union. One reason for the sudden importance of the region was the proximity, in geographical terms, between the two newly risen superpowers. The shortest distance between mainland Russia and mainland Alaska is approximately 55 miles. However, in the body of water between Alaska and Russia, known as the Bering Strait, there are two small islands known as Big Diomedes and Little Diomedes. Interestingly enough, Big Diomedes is owned by Russia while Little Diomedes is owned by the US. The stretch of water between these two islands is only about 2.5 miles wide and actually freezes over during the winter so that one can technically walk from the US to Russia on this seasonal sea ice.⁵ Thus, the two were not only neighbours across the Arctic region, the Soviet Union (and now Russia) also bordered American allies—Canada, Denmark, Greenland, Norway and Sweden. The routes that were used for anti-Axis cooperation were now used to influence the bi-polar international political order. As the Cold War progressed, the militarisation of the Arctic also became a reality. Through the Inter-Continental Ballistic Missile (ICBM) development and placement, production of nuclear powered attack submarines and the threat of cruise missiles carried by bomber planes,

4. Ibid.

5. Alaska Public Lands Information Centre, <https://www.alaskacenters.gov/faqs-people-often-ask/how-close-alaska-russia>. Accessed on January 23, 2019.

the two countries poured resources into building up their capabilities in the area vis-à-vis one another. More prominently, preventive radar systems were built and installed across the region by allies of both America and the Soviet Union.⁶ Apart from the overt military build-up, the region was also used for covert espionage activities and for undertaking some nuclear tests.

With the end of the Cold War, the militarisation of the Arctic region halted. Instead, the Arctic became the arena for a diverse range of cooperation mechanism between the two countries, with the most prominent being the founding of the Arctic Council in 1996. The Council is the leading inter-governmental forum promoting cooperation, coordination and interaction among the Arctic states, the Arctic indigenous communities and the other Arctic inhabitants on common Arctic issues. The countries that form the council are Canada, the Kingdom of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, the Russian Federation, Sweden and the United States.⁷ Apart from the eight Arctic countries, the council also has a number of observer members.⁸ It needs to be further stated that the Council does not look at military security issues. This may be intentional as five⁹ of the eight nations of the Council are also members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), whose charter commits member states to collective self-defence. Finland and Sweden partner the United States on many international issues. It needs to be seen whether the Council will be able to avoid discussing military issues in the

6. Alexandre Piffero Spohr, Jessica da Silva Horing, Luiza Gimenez Cerioli, Bruna Lersch and Josua Gihad Alves Soares, "The Militarization of the Arctic: Political, Economic and Climate Change Challenges", *UFRGSMUN*, vol 1, 2013. <https://www.ufrgs.br/ufrgsmun/2013/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/The-Militarization-of-the-Arctic-Political-Economic-and-Climate-Changes.pdf>, pp. 16. Accessed on January 23, 2019.

7. Apart from states, six organisations representing the Arctic indigenous people have status as permanent participants. They are the Aleut International Association, Arctic Athabaskan Council, Gwich'in Council International, Inuit Circumpolar Council, Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North and Saami Council.

8. Observer status is open to: non-Arctic states, inter-governmental and inter-parliamentary organisations, and global and regional non-governmental organisations. Observer states are: France, Germany, Italian Republic, Japan, The Netherlands, People's Republic of China, Poland, Republic of India, Republic of Korea, Republic of Singapore, Spain, Switzerland and United Kingdom. Thirteen Inter-governmental and Inter-Parliamentary Organisations and 13 Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) are approved observers in the Arctic Council. Details are available at <https://arctic-council.org/index.php/en/about-us/arctic-council/observers>

9. Canada, Denmark, Iceland, Norway, United Kingdom and United States are members of NATO.

The changing climate is also contributing to the debate on the territorial disputes between nations. There has been a trend of increased militarisation of the area to protect nations' interests in the region along exclusive economic zones and territorial waters.

future as complications would be inevitable because of the militarisation in the region, the delimitation of territorial claims as well as the growing interest of new stakeholders like China. Throughout the Cold War, the Arctic played a strategic role, but the current geo-economic importance of the region has once again highlighted the strategic importance of the Arctic to countries that border this region with its fragile environment. The Arctic is home to significant mineral wealth and has substantial oil and gas reserves.

While exploring these resources remains an expensive and technologically challenging proposition, the rapid change in the climate of the region may, in the near future, aid nations to find viable means of exploiting the resources of the region. The changing climate is also contributing to the debate on the territorial disputes between nations. There has been a trend of increased militarisation of the area to protect nations' interests in the region along exclusive economic zones and territorial waters. The environment of the Arctic is changing. With the accelerating melting of ice due to the rise in global temperatures caused by climate change, avenues have opened up for new shipping routes, exploration and exploitation of minerals, fishing and extraction of bio-proteins, etc. At the same time, it is also leading to more military presence and upgradation of defence systems in the region as states try to protect their interests. The militarisation in the region also impacts the regional climate which is an alarming situation as the region as well as its neighbouring countries will face floods, rise in temperature and droughts.

This paper is an attempt to understand the importance of the Arctic for Russia and the United States. It will try to study if the Arctic could be a pole of cooperation between the two states or the beginning of a new arena of confrontation.

RUSSIA AND THE ARCTIC

During the 2011 Arctic Forum, a conference meeting in the White Sea port of Arkhangelsk, Russian President Vladimir Putin had said, "I want to stress the importance of the Northern Sea Route (NSR)¹⁰ as an international artery that will rival traditional trade lanes (such as the Suez Canal¹¹). It will be the shortest route between Europe's largest markets and the Asia-Pacific region that lies across the Arctic."¹² The route is also important for Russia in the development plans for its Far East region. The proposed route will connect the remote region not just to Russia's western regions but also the larger international market.

Russia intended to transform the Northern Sea Route into a viable commercial route, an alternative to the Suez Canal. To develop the capabilities of this route, Russia decided to spend Roubles 38 billion (\$1.2 billion) in 2014 for further building its atomic ice-breaker fleet which would help in accessing the route. In December 2018, Russia's state-owned nuclear corporation Rosatom was able to use this route with the help of Russia's fleet of ice-breakers.¹³

The Arctic has become a geo-strategic and geo-economic priority for both Russia and the US. Insecurity is building within the two sides, which has intensified due to the belligerent relationship between the two. Like in other regions, the Arctic is also showing signs of the renewal of the Cold War minus its ideological differences.

10. The Northern Sea Route has been functional for international shipping since the Soviet times (1987).

11. The Northern Sea Route trims 7,400 km off the southern alternative via the Suez Canal. "Putin Says Arctic Trade Route to Rival Suez", *Arctic Transport*, September 23, 2011. <https://arctictransport.wordpress.com/>.

12. "Arctic Shipping Route Will Soon Rival Suez Canal, Putin Says", *Yale Environment Digest* 360, September 23, 2011. https://e360.yale.edu/digest/arctic_shipping_route_will_soon_rival_suez_canal_putin_says. Accessed on January 26, 2019.

13. Simon Osborne, "Russian Nuclear Icebreakers to Open Previously Impassable Trade Route Through Arctic", *Express.co.in*, December 14, 2018. <https://www.express.co.uk/news/world/1058925/russia-news-northern-sea-route-arctic-ocean-rosatom-nuclear-powered-icebreakers>. Accessed in January 29, 2019. Rosatom is now formally Russia's management authority for the Northern Sea Route from January 2019. Russian Arctic shipping is on a rapid increase. In 2018, about 18 million tons of goods were transported on the sea route, an increase of almost 70 percent from 2017. The Kremlin's priority is to achieve 80 million tons of goods to be transported by 2024. Atle Staalesen, "Rosatom will Manage Russia's Northern Sea Route", *Arctic Today*, January 2, 2019. <https://www.arctictoday.com/rosatom-will-manage-russias-northern-sea-route/>. Accessed on February 19, 2019.

Russia's activities in the Arctic, over the last decade and a half, have sparked responses from other regional states with a tilt towards an increase in military presence in the region. To understand the future of the geo-strategic dynamics in the Arctic region, one has to understand the prevailing dynamics between Russia and the West/NATO along the borders of Russia in Europe. The Arctic has become a geo-strategic and geo-economic priority for both Russia and the US. Insecurity is building within the two sides, which has intensified due to the belligerent relationship between the two. Like in other regions, the Arctic is also showing signs of the renewal of the Cold War minus its ideological differences.

The Arctic has always been important for the US as well as for Russia.¹⁴ During the Cold War, the Arctic provided the shortest flight path for Soviet and American ICBMs and strategic bombers armed with long-range cruise missiles to travel to each other's territories. It was also the most plausible area for the deployment of nuclear ballistic missile submarines (SSBNs) by the United States and the Soviet Union.¹⁵ The Soviet Union—and now Russia—has claimed that parts of the NSR, such as the Vilkitskii, Shokalskii, Dmitrii Laptev, Sannikon Straits and all the straits in the Karsky Sea as "internal waters". This claim has been contested by the United States since 1964. To ensure nuclear deterrence during the Cold War and to counter any claims by the United States, the Northern Fleet (NF) of the Soviet Union was stationed in the Arctic (Kola peninsula). The fleet included surface combat ships and strategic nuclear submarines. It was a '*naval fortress*' which was established in the Arctic to prevent possible intrusion and attack from the NATO fleets.¹⁶

Today, apart from its strategic importance for Russia, it has economic significance. The area generates about 20 percent of Russia's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and 22 percent of Russian exports. In the words of former President Dmitry Medvedev, "...the region is home to major oil and gas

14. Peter the Great in the 18th century was the first tsar who sent an expedition to map his Russian Empire's northern fringes. Murmansk has become a city of mining, military and scientific activity.
15. Michael Lambert, "Russia's Arctic Ambitions Held Back by Economic Troubles", Centre for International Maritime Security, February 28, 2018. <http://cimsec.org/russias-arctic-ambitions-held-back-economic-troubles/35590>. Accessed on January 27, 2019.
16. Barbora Padrtová, "Russian Military Build-up in the Arctic: Strategic Shift in the Balance of Power or Bellicose Rhetoric Only?" *Arctic Yearbook*, 2014, p. 2. https://arcticyearbook.com/images/yearbook/2014/Scholarly_Papers/22.Padrtova.pdf. Accessed on January 17, 2019.

producing areas such as in the West-Siberian, Timano-Pecherskaya and East-Siberian fields. It is also one of the most highly developed sectors in mining of rare and precious metals. Experts have estimated that the Arctic continental shelf could contain around a quarter of the world's hydrocarbon resources. Use of these energy resources is the guarantee for Russia's overall energy security."¹⁷ Since 2008, Russia has been developing its Arctic capabilities to exploit the Arctic resources for its economic benefit as well as to protect these interests through the deployment of effective security mechanisms. It was focussed on energy development and shipping in partnership with other foreign companies.¹⁸

Under the leadership of President Vladimir Putin, Russia, in 2001 submitted its proposed outer limits of the continental shelf of the Russian Federation beyond 200 nautical miles from the baselines to the United Nations Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf (CLCS).¹⁹ However, in 2002, the CLCS issued a recommendation that the application needed additional scientific evidence that the Arctic shelf is part of Russia's landmass. Since the CLCS published its recommendation, Russia has been trying to prove the country's rights to the Lomonosov and Mendeleev ridges as one of its top strategic priorities in the Arctic. It has conducted many scientific expeditions to collect information to strengthen its CLCS application, among them the Arktika 2007 polar expedition.²⁰ This led to a scramble from the other Arctic countries to not only protest Russia's claims but also to chalk out their own territorial claims in the Arctic and the Arctic sea-bed. The CLCS is yet to take a decision on Russia's claim. If the decision favours Russia, it will be able to have rights over the two ridges, Lomonosov and

17. "Speech at Meeting of the Russian Security Council on Protecting Russia's National Interests in the Arctic", President of Russia, September 17, 2008. <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/48304>. Accessed on January 28, 2019.

18. Ekaterina Klimenko, "Russia's Arctic Security Policy Still Quiet in the High North?" *SIPRI Policy Paper*, No. 45, p.1. Accessed on January 28, 2019.

19. "Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf (CLCS) Outer Limits of the Continental Shelf beyond 200 Nautical Miles from the Baselines: Submissions to the Commission: Submission by the Russian Federation", United Nations Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea, updated on June 30, 2009. http://www.un.org/depts/los/clcs_new/submissions_files/submission_rus.htm.

20. Klimenko, n. 18, pp. 11-12. The underwater Lomonosov ridge is important for Russia as it links Siberia to the Arctic. "Medvedev: Arctic Resources are Key to Russia's Future", *The Seattle Times*, September 18, 2008. <https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/medvedev-arctic-resources-are-key-to-russias-future/>.

Developments in the Arctic by the other Arctic nations – nearly all allies or partners of the United States – and their claims on the territories and resources, made the Kremlin rethink its Arctic policies.

Mendeleev.²¹ It will help expand its strategic reach into the Arctic while expanding its economic policies for the region.

The political developments near Russia's borders such as the Colour Revolutions in Ukraine and Georgia and the ambiguity in the policies of the West, especially the United States, towards Russia, have pushed the latter to rethink and assert its policies in the Arctic. The discourse on the importance of the Arctic within the Russian academic and strategic community has also increased after these events. For instance, during the 2008 War with Georgia, Russia was put under restrictions by Ukraine over prior permission for the Russian Black Sea Fleet when crossing the Ukrainian border.²² The denial of access to the Black Sea made Russia realise the vulnerability of its position in the Black Sea. The Kremlin has never been at ease over Ukraine's pro-West leaning as it is indicative of the expansion of NATO in Russia's near border. Similarly, the developments in the Arctic by the other Arctic nations—nearly all allies or partners of the United States—and their claims on the territories and resources, made the Kremlin rethink its Arctic policies. In 2008, former President Medvedev stated that Russia's biggest task is to "turn the Arctic into Russia's resource base for the 21st century..." and to protect its national interests in the Arctic region.²³

21. Russia claims that Lomonosov ridge is an extension of its Serbian continental shelf whereas Denmark claims it as a part of Greenland. Similarly, Russia claims the Mendeleev ridge to be a part of the Eurasian continent.

22. "Moscow Slams Kiev's 'Unfriendly' Stance", *France 24*, September 11, 2008. <https://www.france24.com/en/20080911-policies-russia-unfriendly-ukraine-georgia-sebastopol-lavrov>. Accessed on February 25, 2019. This happened despite the December 2003 Treaty Between the Russian Federation and Ukraine on Cooperation in the Use of the Sea of Azov and the Kerch Strait. The former Ukrainian President Viktor Yushchenko imposed restrictions on the Russian fleet, requiring ships to seek permission at least 72 hours prior to crossing the Ukrainian border. Ibid.

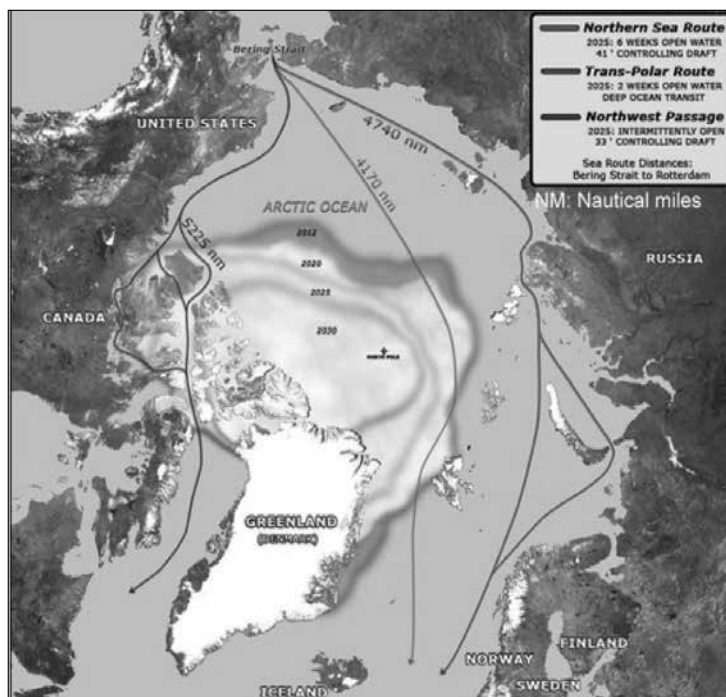
23. n. 11. Mr. Medvedev in his speech laid down the future task, including fixing of the border on the continental shelf, for Russia in the region. In the 2008 policy "The Foundations of Russian Federation Policy in the Arctic until 2020 and Beyond", the report also spoke about securing a mutually beneficial presence for Russia on the Spitsbergen peninsula. "The Foundations of Russian Federation Policy in the Arctic until 2020 and Beyond: Russia's New Arctic Strategy", American Foreign Policy Council (translated version), September 18, 2008, pp.98-99. http://www.arctic.or.kr/files/pdf/m4/rusia_eng.pdf. Accessed on January 28, 2019.

In its policy “The Foundations of Russian Federation Policy in the Arctic until 2020 and Beyond” released in 2008, Russia underlined its national interest in the Arctic. It states, “The basic national interests of the Russian Federation in the Arctic are: (a) use of the Arctic zone of the Russian Federation as a strategic resource base of the Russian Federation providing the solution of problems of social and economic development of the country; (b) maintenance of the Arctic as a zone of peace and cooperation; (c) preservation of the unique ecological systems of the Arctic; (d) use of the Northern Sea Route as a national single transport communication corridor of the Russian Federation in the Arctic . National interests determine basic objectives, primary goals and strategic priorities of the state policy of the Russian Federation in the Arctic. The realisation of national interests of the Russian Federation in the Arctic is to be done by the institutions of state power together with the institutions of civil society in strict conformity with the legislation of the Russian Federation and its international treaties.”²⁴ **Russia has laid stress on the importance of maintaining the necessary combat potential in the north in order to secure the country’s national interests in various military and political situations. It has also laid a lot of stress in the document on economic development of the area.** The opening of the NSR helps Russia to achieve its national interests as the route is the officially designated route of the country for its commercial traffic for Europe and beyond. Moscow is not putting any barriers in the shipping route for other countries currently. However, in the long run, there is a possibility that Russia might manipulate this route as it does in the Sea of Azov in the Black Sea. In 2018, a Bill was placed before the Duma to

24. The Arctic Database, “Russian Federation Policy for the Arctic to 2020,” <http://www.arctis-search.com/tiki-index.php?page=Russian%20Federation%20Policy%20for%20the%20Arctic%20to%202020>. Accessed on January 2, 2019.

restrict the use of the route.²⁵ There is a possibility that Russia may use a similar process to restrict the access to the use of the NSR in the future or limit the number of ships that use the route. While this may help limit the environmental damage that is caused by commercial ships to the pristine waters of the Arctic, it begs the question of whether the other nations of the Arctic will allow this and also the question of the commercial viability of the NSR if Russia restricts movement here.

Fig 1: Arctic Transit Routes and Their Projected Navigability, 2012-30²⁶



Source: U.S. Navy. | GAO-19-42

25. Russia was supposed to start with the regulation on foreign ships passing through the NSR route from January 1, 2019. It was deliberated that while the sailing route will not be consequently fully closed for foreign-built ships, Russia will issue passes to the foreign ships to pass through. "Russian Deputy Prime Minister Supports Restrictions on Northern Sea Route", *Safety for Sea*, September 21, 2018. <https://safety4sea.com/russian-deputy-prime-minister-supports-restrictions-on-northern-sea-route/>. Accessed on February 19, 2019.
26. US Government Accountability Office, "Navy Report to Congress Aligns with Current Assessments of Arctic Threat Levels and Capabilities Required to Execute DOD's Strategy," <https://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-19-42>. Accessed on February 21, 2019.

Militarisation of the Arctic

Geo-politics and Russia's present position have made it clear to Russia that the United States and the West are not yet ready to genuinely cooperate with it nor treat it as an equal partner. There is perpetual competition and clash of interests which has continued from the Tsarist period²⁷ through the Cold War, to the present. This competition can be seen in the Arctic very clearly.

The two reasons for the upgradation in Russia's militarisation in the Arctic are:

- The vast natural resources, including energy²⁸ and raw minerals in Russia's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ); and
- The everlasting threat from the United States and its allies in the West, strategically as well as security-wise.

Apart from the above two reasons, China's growing claims have further added to the Russian insecurity. A report by the European Parliament stated that China actually does not have territorial sovereignty and related sovereign rights to resource extraction and fishing in the Arctic.²⁹ Nonetheless, the shortest distance between China and the Arctic is 900 miles,³⁰ which has

27. There have been periods of rapprochement between Russia and the West on many occasions, but neither in a consistent manner, nor genuine.

28. Russia's oil and gas production accounts for 80 percent and 99 percent of the Arctic production respectively. Tang Guoqiang, "Arctic Issues and China's Policies", *CIIIS*, February 6, 2013. http://www.ciiis.org.cn/gyzz/2013-02/06/content_5727672.htm. Accessed on January 28, 2019. With the depletion of its matured oil and gas fields in the country, the Arctic's reservoirs are critical for Russia, domestically as well as strategically.

29. Gisela Grieger, "China's Arctic Policy: How China Aligns Rights and Interests", European Parliament, PE 620.231, May 2018. [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2018/620231/EPRS_BRI\(2018\)620231_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2018/620231/EPRS_BRI(2018)620231_EN.pdf). Accessed on January 28, 2019.

30. In fact, 900 miles which comes to approximately, 1,448.41 km is quite far. The Chinese claim of 'Near Arctic' despite the distance shows the assertiveness in their decisions. It is interesting to observe the basis of their claims. Under the UNCLOS, it seems difficult for China to have its claim. It is because under the convention, "the Coastal States have sovereign rights over the continental shelf (the national area of the seabed) for exploring and exploiting it; the shelf can extend at least 200 nautical miles from the shore, and more under specified circumstances". "United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982: Overview and Full Text", *Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea*, Last updated March 28, 2018. http://www.un.org/depts/los/convention_agreements/convention_overview_convention.htm. However, there is a change in rhetoric from the Chinese side. China, in the 2009-10 declaration was demanding the Arctic as the common heritage of mankind, however, since 2013 there is the narrative of 'Near Arctic' coming up.

led to subtle assertions by China of its claims in the region by referring to itself as a ‘**near Arctic**’ nation. Speaking to the Arctic Circle Assembly in late 2015, China’s Vice Foreign Minister Ming declared his country “a major stakeholder in the Arctic.”³¹

For China, apart from the energy and minerals, the rich reservoirs of fish³² and bio-protein are reasons enough for its interest. Its maritime Silk Road initiative to link China to Europe³³ also makes the Arctic region lucrative (Beijing is envisioning its strategy in the Arctic through the “Polar Silk Road”³⁴ which was declared in China’s 2018 Arctic Policy³⁵). The Polar Silk Road as well as the declaration of an Arctic Policy helps China in its grand strategy of being the rising power. Having claims in the Arctic will also help China in asserting its claims in the South China Sea.³⁶ Till now, China’s claims in the Arctic are not recognised internationally, hence, to mark its interest in the region, Beijing, in its 2018 Arctic Policy, talks about supporting “the peaceful settlement of disputes over territory and maritime rights and interests by all parties concerned in accordance with such treaties as the UN Charter and the UNCLOS and general international law”. However, its actions in the South China Sea are the opposite, an indication of the double standards the country is pursuing. On the South China Sea dispute, China

31. The Munich Security Report 2017, “The Arctic: Tempers Rising?” <https://www.securityconference.de/publikationen/munich-security-report/munich-security-report-2017/places/the-arctic-tempers-rising/>. Accessed on January 29, 2019.

32. The Barents Sea and Beaufort Sea will become new important fishing grounds. Guoqiang, n. 28.

33. The ‘Northwest Passage’ and ‘Northeast Passage’ will help China to reduce the travel time to Europe from 15,000 miles to 8,000 miles. Gwynn Guilford, “What Is China’s Arctic Game Plan?” *The Atlantic*, May 16, 2013. <https://www.theatlantic.com/china/archive/2013/05/what-is-chinas-arctic-game-plan/275894/>. Accessed on January 28, 2019

34. For China, the ‘Polar Silk Road’ is the third extension of the One Belt and One Road Initiative. Sherri Goodman and Marisol Maddox, “China’s Growing Arctic Presence”, Wilson Centre, November 19, 2018. <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/chinas-growing-arctic-presence>. Accessed on January 28, 2019.

35. “China Publishes Arctic Policy, Eyeing Vision of ‘Polar Silk Road’”, *Xinhua*, January 26, 2018. http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-01/26/c_136926357.htm. Accessed on January 28, 2019.

36. In its 2018 Arctic Policy, China talks about supporting “the peaceful settlement of disputes over territory and maritime rights and interests by all parties concerned in accordance with such treaties as the UN Charter and the UNCLOS and general international law”. “Full Text: China’s Arctic Policy”, *Xinhua*, January 26, 2018. http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-01/26/c_136926498_4.htm. The South China Sea has been witnessing conflict for a long time, which grew since 2007 as there has been rising interest in exploiting the oil and gas deposits as well as the fishing reservoirs.

has not accepted nor acknowledged the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) judgement which is based on the provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Seas (UNCLOS), while it seems to be seeking a piece of the Arctic pie under the very same provisions of the UNCLOS. An area of concern are the military assertions by Beijing in the region of the South China Sea. China believes that a country which can militarily lead the region can occupy the commanding heights of the world military.³⁷ The rejection of the international tribunal in The Hague over the South China Sea in 2016 shows the assertiveness and non-compliance of China over its claims. Based on the history of China's militarisation, it is being assumed that China will try to militarise the Arctic region as it asserts its claims and tries to access the region's vast potential.

Russia shares a cordial relationship with China³⁸ and cooperates with Beijing in countering the United States' dominance, including in the South China Sea.³⁹ However, Moscow is not willing to allow Beijing to dominate the Arctic or the discourse around it. The 2016 South China Sea military drill with China carried two messages from Russia:

- Firstly, the drill was a signal to the United States and its allies such as Japan, about Russia's naval power in the region and its non-compromising attitude towards the Kuril Islands. It was also to break the US hegemony in the region as well as in the international organisations such as the

37. Guoqiang, n. 28. During the Cold War, the Arctic became the front line for US-Soviet Union confrontation.

38. Due to the sanctions since 2014, Russia has not been able to acquire the sophisticated technology needed to develop the energy fields in the Arctic, leading to the partnership between Moscow and Asian countries, especially with China and, to an extent, with India. In the Yamal natural gas project, China has received a share of 39 percent, which is a large stake (Russia holds 50.1 percent and 20 percent is held by France's energy conglomerate, Total. Humphrey Hawksley, "China's Arctic Plan Spreads a Chill", *Nikkei Asian Review*, February 16, 2018. <https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/International-Relations/China-s-Arctic-plan-spreads-a-chill>. Accessed on January 26, 2019.

39. The military exercise between Russia and China in 2016 was a signal to the US as well as America's allies and other powers about the growing alliance between Moscow and Beijing. The drill was a power projection from both the countries.

UNCLOS and International Tribunal in the Hague.⁴⁰

- Secondly, the exercise can also be interpreted as a message from Russia to China over Moscow's assertiveness and naval power, and its ambitions in the region and beyond.

Russia has developed at an accelerated pace its Anti-Access/Area Denial (A2/AD) capabilities (air and missile defences, surface-to-surface ballistic missiles, land, air and sea launched cruise missile batteries, layered anti-submarine warfare capabilities) in zones where the country could face external military pressure in the future. This has been the case in Crimea, Kaliningrad, and the Arctic.⁴¹ On the formation of the Joint Strategic Command in 2014, President Putin said that the formation of the Northern Fleet Joint Strategic Command has enhanced security in the Arctic. The command will also help in promoting the modernisation of military infrastructure in this region which is important for the Russian⁴² national interest. Russia has also built the Tor-M2DT anti-aircraft missile battalion, suitable for the Arctic region.⁴³ There has been ongoing construction and development of several permanent bases in the region. The constructions on the Alexandra Island (the Franz Josef Land archipelago), Kotelny⁴⁴ Island (this division will be rearmed with more precise and high-speed weapons⁴⁵), Sredny and Wrangel Islands, Novaya

40. Russia has always supported the United Nations and other international institutions, however, it has been against the domination of the US over these organisations. Likewise, China broke the decision of the International Tribunal in Hague over the South China Sea dispute with its neighbours.

41. "Russia's National Security Strategy and Military Doctrines and Their Implications for the EU", European Parliament, 2017, p. 15. http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/IDAN/2017/578016/EXPO_IDA%282017%29578016_EN.pdf. Accessed on January 28, 2019.

42. "Russia's Military Infrastructure on Cape Schmidt, Wrangel Island to be Built by Late 2015", Russia Defence Forum, May 15, 2015. <http://www.russiadefence.net/t2746p105-arctic-rush>. Accessed on January 28, 2019.

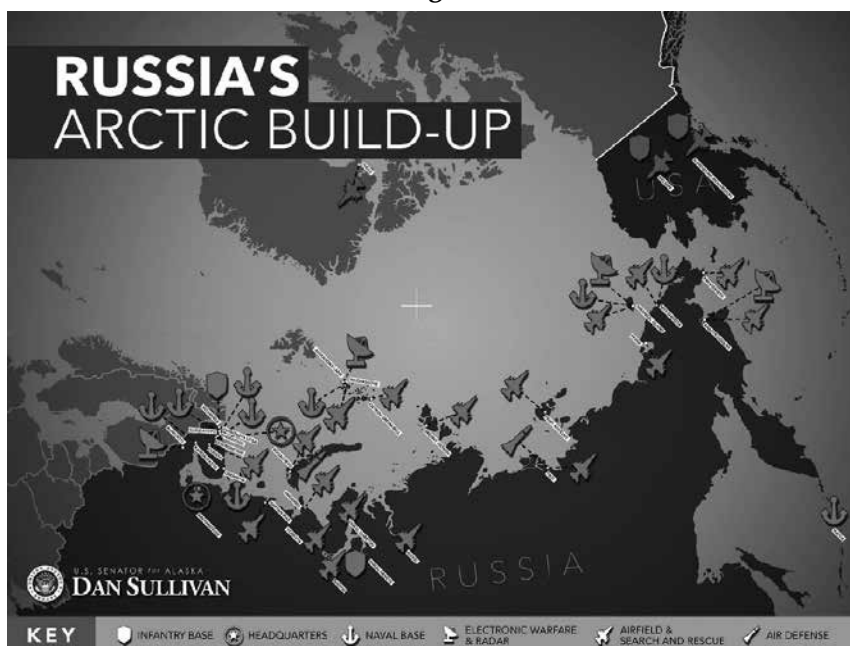
43. Li Zhixin, "The Arctic Sea Escalating Militarisation", China Military Online, December 7, 2018. http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/view/2018-12/07/content_9372164.htm Accessed on January 25, 2019.

44. This island, along with the base in Tiksi, will help Russia to protect the offshore oil and gas resources in the area. These bases will also support the country in keeping surveillance on the foreign ships sailing along the Northern Sea Route. Trude Pettersen, "Russia Re-Opens Arctic Cold War Era Air Base", *The Barents Observer*, October 30, 2013. <https://barentsobserver.com/en/security/2013/10/russia-re-opens-arctic-cold-war-era-air-base-30-10>. Accessed on January 27, 2019.

45. Atle Staalesen, "Russia Builds Another Military Base in East Arctic", *The Barents Observer*, September 3, 2018. <https://thebarentsobserver.com/en/2018/09/russia-builds-another-military-base-east-arctic>. Accessed on January 28, 2019.

Zemlya, the village of Alakurtti and Cape Schmidt reflect the broader pattern in Russia's Arctic activity. All these activities are helping Moscow to establish a monitoring outpost and stake a symbolic territorial claim.⁴⁶ The country is in accelerated pace in reopening and reconstructing the Soviet-era ports and airfields in the region.

Fig 2



Source: U.S. Senator for Alaska, *The Arctic Institute*, 2018.⁴⁷

In its military doctrines, including the Maritime Doctrine of 2015,⁴⁸ Russia has clearly mentioned the Arctic, apart from the Atlantic, as the

46. "Russia in the Arctic: A Different Kind of Military Presence", *Stratfor*, November 11, 2015. <https://worldview.stratfor.com/article/russia-arctic-different-kind-military-presence>. Accessed on January 28, 2019.

47. https://www.thearcticinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Russia_Arctic-military-build-up.jpg. Accessed on February 21, 2019.

48. This maritime doctrine was adopted in 2001 but was updated in 2015. President Putin made the changes in 2015. The reasons he gave for the amendments were the changing international scenarios and strengthening Russia's position as a sea power. "Russian Federation Marine Doctrine", President of Russia, July 26, 2015. <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/50060>. In the 2014 Military Doctrine, the employment of the armed forces for the protection of its national interests in the Arctic is clearly mentioned.

In November 2018, Russia passed a notification to all countries regarding prior notification to the Russian government on foreign military ships sailing through the Russian Arctic sea route. A possible rationale behind the notification may be the Kerch Strait incident in Ukraine in 2018.

country's main focus. The doctrine states the importance of the Arctic as it helps in the unhindered and free access to the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans.⁴⁹ It will help Russia to have its strategic presence as well as control over its claims. In November 2018, Russia passed a notification to all countries regarding prior notification to the Russian government on foreign military ships sailing through the Russian Arctic sea route. A possible rationale behind the notification may be the Kerch Strait incident in Ukraine in 2018.⁵⁰ The notification is being viewed as an approach by Russia to protect its strategic claims in the region as it will also allow it to monitor the movement of ships of other nations, including China.

Russia's Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu announced the Russian Defence Ministry's plans to hold the Strategic Command staff exercise codenamed Centre-2019 in September 2019,⁵¹ which will bring Russia's Northern Fleet, Pacific Fleet and Central Military District together. It will be held between the Novaya Zemlya and New Siberian Islands. The exercise is not only intended to check the range of new weaponry such as air defence missiles, armoured vehicles, all-terrain vehicles and support equipment but also test the impact of climate conditions on both the armed forces and weapon systems.⁵² If the exercise proves to be successful, then it will be a great boost for the Russian

49. Ibid.

50. On November 25, 2018, the Russian Federal Security Service's Border Service in Crimea said that three Ukrainian warships had violated the international maritime law by illegally crossing Russia's state border, entering its territorial waters of the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov and the Kerch Strait through the Kerch-Yenikale Canal, leading to the opening of gunfire from the Russian side. The incident had created a lot of tension in the West, given the belligerent relationship Russia and Ukraine have. "Three Ukrainian Warships Intrude into Russia's Territorial Waters – FSB", TASS, November 25, 2018. <http://tass.com/emergencies/1032402>. Accessed on January 29, 2019.

51. "Strategic Exercise Tsentr-2019 to be Held in September", TASS, December 4, 2018. <http://tass.com/defense/1034163>. Accessed on January 26, 2019.

52. James Seidel, "Russia Announced Large-Scale Arctic War-Games in 2019", *News Corp*, December 21, 2018. <https://www.news.com.au/technology/innovation/military/russia-announced-largescale-arctic-wargames-in-2019/news-story/148ebcce1fb414e812003a76e4f0156d>. Accessed on January 28, 2019.

government, given the competition the region is facing. It will also help Russia to export these tested weapons to other countries such as India, China⁵³, Japan, Singapore and South Korea which have also shown an interest in the Arctic.

The landscape of the Arctic is ever changing. It is an arena for both cooperation⁵⁴ as well as competition. Russia is working towards securing its national interests in the region, including by improving its military capabilities in the region. The refocus on the Soviet era military bases and their reequipping and rebuilding provides some indication of

Russia is working towards securing its national interests in the region, including by improving its military capabilities in the region. The refocus on the Soviet era military bases and their reequipping and rebuilding provides some indication of Russia's strategy in the region.

Russia's strategy in the region. The Arctic, for Russia, is an extension of Eurasia. Policy-makers and scholars talk about it as the 'maritime Eurasia'. Hence, weakening its position or letting its guard down in the region is not foreseeable; rather, it would be the opposite.⁵⁵ More complications will arise in this region because of the non-ratification of the UNCLOS by the United States and China's claim of being a 'near Arctic state'. Nonetheless, the unpredictable and harsh climate of the Arctic and a strong United Nations might stop the region from becoming the next battleground of multipolarity.⁵⁶

53. It is possible that China might be building its own indigenous weaponry for the Arctic. The launch of the recent indigenous nuclear-powered ice-breaker has raised eyebrows possibly within the Russian circle as well) as it can be further developed into a nuclear-powered aircraft carrier. This development can be in the direction of building its own armed forces in the Arctic. Secondly, China became a permanent observer in the Arctic Circle in 2013 and its claim in the 'Near Arctic' is yet to be recognised by UNCLOS. Given its strong interest in the region, it would be no surprise to know that Beijing has been clandestinely equipping itself militarily.

54. Till what extent there is genuine cooperation is questionable given the strategic interests of all the stakeholders as well as the non-stakeholders.

55. Last year, in the month of December, Russia announced an ambitious five-year plan of Roubles 5.5 trillion (approximately about €72 billion) for regional infrastructure and natural resource development in the region.

56. With the world moving towards a multipolar world order and China being a non-member claiming its stake in the region, it will not be surprising to see other countries aligning with the Arctic states (initially) and having their positions firmly grounded. In fact, if China is able to succeed, it will open a new path for other countries.

THE UNITED STATES AND THE ARCTIC

The United States identifies itself as an Arctic nation with broad and fundamental interests in the region since the purchase of Alaska from Russia on 1867. According to the US Department of State, national security and economic development were the key determinants of the United States' interests in the region then as they remain now.⁵⁷ With changing global politics, the policies of the United States to achieve the above stated goals have changed. The United States Arctic Policy is based on the following principal objectives: meeting US national security needs; protecting the Arctic environment and conserving its living resources; ensuring environmentally-sustainable natural resource management and economic development in the region; strengthening institutions for cooperation among the eight Arctic nations (the United States, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, the Russian Federation and Sweden); involving the Arctic's indigenous communities in decisions that affect them; and, enhancing scientific monitoring and research on local, regional, and global environmental issues.⁵⁸ During its two-year rotating chairmanship of the Arctic Council (April 2015 to May 2017), the United States worked with the council members on three areas: improving economic and living conditions; Arctic Ocean safety, security and stewardship; and addressing the impacts of climate change. The overarching theme, "One Arctic: Shared Opportunities, Challenges and Responsibilities," recognised and celebrated the region's long-term peace and stability.⁵⁹ Although there is significant international cooperation on Arctic issues, the region is increasingly being viewed by some observers as a potential emerging security issue. There is growing concern within the United States that it is not prepared for the changing geo-politics of the polar region. Security experts are of the opinion that the United States Coast Guard and the US Navy need to factor in the Arctic in future planning and operations if the United States wants to continue to play a role here. "Securing Our Arctic Interests Act

57. US Department of State, "Arctic", <https://www.state.gov/e/oes/ocns/opa/arc/>. Accessed on February 17, 2019.

58. Ibid.

59. n. 51.

of 2017",⁶⁰ a Bill introduced in the House of Representatives, authorises the Administration to procure six polar class ice-breakers. The Bill stated, "The strategic importance of the Arctic continues to increase as the United States and other countries recognise the military significance of the sea lanes and choke points within the region and understand the potential for power projection from the Arctic into multiple regions." It also stated that the economic significance of the Arctic has grown as nations understand the potential for maritime transportation. However, it did point out that this may lead to maritime accidents, oil spills and illegal fishing in the waters of the United States, leading to new challenges and mission requirements for the Department of Defence and Department of Homeland Security. While this Bill did not talk about the environmental concerns, Representative Jared Huffman (D-CA) and more than 100 members of Congress have introduced a bi-partisan legislation to restore protection to the pristine coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (on February 11, 2019). The Arctic Cultural and Coastal Plain Protection Act would halt the Trump Administration in its rush to open the region to oil and gas drilling exploration, by repealing a controversial provision in the 2017 Republican Party's Tax Bill. However, it is clear that a lot more needs to be done to not only protect the Arctic environment but also to help the larger global eco-system.

Concentrating on the strategic/security aspect, one finds that based on the United States Arctic Doctrine [National Strategy for the Arctic Region 2013,⁶¹ Department of Defence (DoD) Arctic Strategy 2013⁶² and the updated DoD Arctic Strategy 2016⁶³], American interests in the region can be divided into several groups. First, it has military-strategic interests, including missile defence and early warning systems; deployment of sea and air systems for strategic sea-lift; strategic deterrence; maritime presence and maritime security operations; and

60. Text of the Bill is available at <https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/senate-bill/1442/all-actions?overview=closed#tabs>. As of June 26, 2017, it is with the Senate Subcommittee on Commerce, Science and transportation.

61. The National Strategy for the Arctic Region 2013 is available at https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/sites/default/files/docs/nat_arctic_strategy.pdf

62. The Department of Defence, "Arctic Strategy 2013" is available at https://www.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/2013_Arctic_Strategy.pdf

63. The Department of Defence, "Arctic Strategy 2016" is available at <https://www.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/2016-Arctic-Strategy-UNCLOS-cleared-for-release.pdf>

While remaining within the limits of its jurisdiction in the Arctic, the United States wants to protect its sovereign rights and exercise “appropriate control” over the contiguous waters; and maintain freedom of trans-Arctic over-flights and freedom of navigation throughout the Arctic.

ensuring freedom of navigation and over-flight. The Arctic is important for the United States to conduct its maritime security operations while ensuring the safety of its military bases in Alaska. It has also stated that it will be willing and prepared to “act unilaterally if necessary in defence of its interest in the region”. Second, the United States has a national security interest in preventing terrorist attacks or other criminal acts that increase its vulnerability in the Arctic region while bolstering its sea power. Third, the United States has political and economic interests. While remaining within the limits of its jurisdiction in the Arctic, the United

States wants to protect its sovereign rights and exercise “appropriate control” over the contiguous waters; and maintain freedom of trans-Arctic over-flights and freedom of navigation throughout the Arctic, including the Northern Sea Route, which is also one of the top national priorities. A key aspect that seems to be missing from the national discourse on the Arctic is the security of the environment of the Arctic. The Strategy for the Arctic Region 2013 does mention the need for the United States Defence Department to work with other agencies, departments and nations to support human and environment safety. Nonetheless, there is a greater focus on the traditional military security aspects. On January 12, 2017, former Secretary of Defence James Mattis stated that “[t]he Arctic is key strategic terrain...Russia is taking aggressive steps to increase its presence there.... I will prioritize the development of an integrated strategy for the Arctic. I believe that our interests and the security of the Arctic would benefit from increasing the focus of the Department of Defense on this region”.⁶⁴ On March 2, 2018, the US Navy, in collaboration with the US Coast Guard, under the polar ice-breaker integrated programme office, released a Request For Proposal (RFP) for the advance procurement and detail design for the coast guard’s heavy

64. Robbie Gramer, “Here’s What Russia’s Military Build-Up in the Arctic Looks Like,” <https://foreignpolicy.com/2017/01/25/heres-what-russias-military-build-up-in-the-arctic-looks-like-trump-oil-military-high-north-infographic-map/>. Accessed on January 29, 2019.

polar ice-breaker, with options for detail design and construction for up to three heavy polar ice-breakers.⁶⁵ A Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Mission Need Statement (MNS) approved in June 2013 states that the US Coast Guard will need to expand its ice-breaking capacity to meet future mission demands. Apart from the needs of the Coast Guard, the United States Navy is also focussing on the Arctic. In 2011, the US Navy shifted the responsibility of the Arctic from three commands to two – from the US Pacific Command (PACOM) to just the North Command (NORTHCOM) and European Command (EUCOM), with the NORTHCOM in

the lead. It has been understood by the US Navy that it would have to redefine its operations in the Arctic region as global warming is changing the way maritime warfare was planned. For example, the Arctic would no longer be available to conceal nuclear submarines in the future.

Within the North American Aerospace Defence Command (NORAD), Canada and the United States have begun planning a replacement for the North Warning System (likely to be finished by 2030)—the network of air defence radars across the top of the continent. Jointly funded and operated through NORAD—though located primarily in Canada—the system’s renewal comes in the context of a persistent Cold War revivalism that presages a preoccupation with national defence and geo-strategic competition.⁶⁶ The primary strategic role of the system, like in the past, would be to track long range Russian military aircraft. Apart from strategic stability, it was also felt

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65. Congressional Research Service, “Changes in the Arctic: Background and Issues for Congress”, Updated on 13 Dec. 2018, <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/R41153.pdf>. Accessed on January 28, 2019.

66. Ernie Regehr, “Replacing the North Warning System: Strategic Competition or Arctic Confidence Building?”, *The Arctic Security Briefing Paper*, <http://www.thesimonsfoundation.ca/sites/default/files/Replacing%20the%20North%20Warning%20System-Strategic%20competition%20or%20Arctic%20confidence%20building%20-%20Arctic%20Security%20Briefing%20Paper%2C%20March%201%202018.pdf>. Accessed on January 29, 2019.

that such a system is needed to respond to the changes in the physical climate and to enhance domain awareness for security and safety reasons. With increasing access to, and movement in, the Arctic, the region needs support for protection of national defence, public safety as well as environmental safety.

Many experts have noted how Washington's motivation towards the north has changed. The United States did not identify itself—its national identity—with the Arctic. However, with the change in the Arctic environment and its importance in geo-politics, it has now become part of the American military and foreign policy. During the Cold War, the Arctic was predominantly an area of military and strategic confrontation with the Soviet Union; today, the security compulsions ensure that economic interests are not forgotten. The United States, unlike Russia, has not yet allocated the necessary resources to the Arctic security plans but it would likely change in the near future due to a trust deficit between the erstwhile superpowers and the growing importance of the region for commercial activity.

IMPACT OF THE UNITED STATES-RUSSIA RELATIONS IN THE ARCTIC

With its growing importance, the Arctic is becoming more susceptible to outside/geo-political influences while playing a very limited role in the events that affect it. For the United States and Russia, as the two important Arctic nations, the resources of the Arctic—both natural and human—along with its strategic location, demand attention in national and international policy-making. Bilateral relations between the United States and Russia have an impact on the various programmes that are in place to protect the Arctic and its environment as well as to ensure cooperation among the coast guards of the member-countries. The council is the primary organisation dealing with Arctic governance and provides the two nations with an opportunity to cooperate and collaborate at both the multilateral and bilateral levels. Nonetheless, it needs to be noted that while the council's other member-states have important stakes in the development of a peaceful, secure and sustainable Arctic, they all share a close relationship with the United States.

This means that the United States has the ability to influence the decisions of its partner nations and wean them away from Russia. It also means that, as the tensions with Russia increase, they are looking at the possibility of the military presence of NATO in the far north. This would increase the possibility of a militarised Arctic.

Other crises also have an impact on the Arctic. For example, as the conflict over Ukraine dragged on and escalated, Russian-US tensions in the international arena began to have an effect on the Arctic, too. Eventually, these dynamics started influencing the economics of the Arctic region and the development of mineral deposits' research, and search and rescue operations. The United States cancelled joint search and rescue training operations by the coast guard service. The updated list of the United States and European Union sanctions against Russia also mentions the economically significant energy sector. As the Western countries refused to transfer the technology for deep-water drilling to Russia, the latter's prospecting for oil and shale oil extraction in the Arctic got limited. The sanctions also put restrictions on the investment in, and financing of, oil and energy projects in Russia. This pushed some Western energy giants to withdraw from the projects to develop Russia's Arctic offshore zone. However, there are some reports of the sanctions having been circumvented subtly. For instance, Norway used to assist Russia with deep-water drilling technology. Due to the sanctions being imposed on Russia since 2014, the collaboration on technology had to be stopped. However, circumvention of these sanctions has been done. There are news reports that the Norwegian companies Boa Bison and Sea Spear and Sea Supraare are engaged in supporting drilling activities at both the Rusanovsky and Nyarmeysky areas which come under Russia.⁶⁷ In fact, instances like this add to the complications between Russia and the United States. It shows that the Western countries might ignore US' actions to protect their own interests. If this continues, it could accelerate geo-

67. Atle Staalesen,, "Norwegian Supply Ships Support Drilling Activities in Russian Arctic", *Eye on the Arctic*, August 16, 2018. <http://www.rcinet.ca/eye-on-the-arctic/2018/08/16/norway-ships-russia-drilling-oil-platforms-supply-arctic/>. Accessed on February 20, 2019.

While the opening of the NSR is likely to reduce the time taken for container shipment and, thus, cut costs, environmentalists are worried about the effects of the growing container traffic in an already fragile environment. The movement of ships and the waste they generate will further add to the warming of the Arctic waters.

strategic competition in the region, adding a new dimension to the neo-Cold War.⁶⁸ Already, the bellicose relationship between Russia and the United States has impacted the littoral states in the region.

Tensions in Russia-United States relations generate concerns about stability and security in the Arctic for the littoral states as well. These countries, while small in size and power, are important players in the region and the Arctic Council. As tensions between the two former superpowers mount, these smaller nations have started a process to review and revise their security and defence programmes. They are building plans to modernise and enhance their capabilities in

the region. At the same time, they have called on both the United States and Russia to develop the Arctic together and to ensure that the Arctic remains a region of low political tension.

For Russia, the Arctic presents an opportunity to build/open new shipping routes from Asia to Europe and further on to North America. This not only provides Russia with economic opportunities to enhance its trade, it also allows it to deepen its relations with the other countries that would like to use this new sea route. While the opening of the NSR is likely to reduce the time taken for container shipment and, thus, cut costs, environmentalists are worried about the effects of the growing container traffic in an already fragile environment. The movement of ships and the waste they generate will further add to the warming of the Arctic waters. There is also the fear of an oil spill that would not only damage the environment but would be expensive to clean up due to the cold climate of the region. As the country with the largest coastline, it will be Russia's burden to be the first to respond to a crisis in the Arctic.

68. In 2017, US President Donald Trump lifted the ban on drilling in the Arctic, paving the way to competition in the region.

The NSR is not a viable option as yet with the sea ice posing a major hurdle to the movement of ships. The floating blocks of ice require not just specialised ships but well-trained captains and crew to navigate the Arctic.

Russia, as the country with the largest coastline, would, by default, need to be well prepared to handle the calls for search and rescue. It is the country that has the largest number of ice-breakers operational in the Arctic waters, and can provide assistance to a ship in need very quickly. It also has the expertise in terms of personnel to operate in the harsh climate of the Arctic. It is further enhancing its capabilities for modernisation and development of the infrastructure of the Arctic transport system and the fisheries complex in the Arctic zone of the Russian Federation.⁶⁹ However, Russia's growing military infrastructure in the region has caused concern to some of the other members of the Arctic Council. Russia has stated that it is strengthening its coast guard facilities; it has also clearly stated through its policy document for 2020, that the military should be able to provide security in various military-political situations.

For the United States, one hindrance is the fact that the US Congress has not ratified the UNCLOS, which excludes the United States from participating in one of the most important legal frameworks available for adjudication of sovereignty issues and the governance of the Arctic. The United States needs to reconsider its decision to not be part of the UNCLOS. The Department of Defence being the primary agency in securing American interests, would have to work with other departments, notably of commerce and the environment, to coordinate territorial, regulatory and environmental considerations in its missions. The Arctic has a number of tribes that call the region home and

The US Congress has not ratified the UNCLOS, which excludes the United States from participating in one of the most important legal frameworks available for adjudication of sovereignty issues and the governance of the Arctic.

69. The Arctic Database, "Russian Federation Policy for the Arctic to 2020," <http://www.arctis-search.com/tiki-index.php?page=Russian%20Federation%20Policy%20for%20the%20Arctic%20to%202020>. Accessed on January 27, 2019.

their interests require to be taken into consideration as the United States and Russia build their Arctic policies. Both countries need to take climate change and environmental degradation into serious consideration. Apart from the exploration and exploitation of natural resources such as oil and gas, minerals, fishing, bio-proteins, etc., tourism is also becoming a fast income source for the members of the council.

A matter of concern is that all these activities are hampering the fauna of the region. Russia is taking the initiative to protect the fauna such as the polar bear programme in Franz Josef Island. This island was included in the Arctic National Park that aimed at protecting the Arctic eco-system. However, at the same time, Aleksandra Island in Franz Josef Island has built a military infrastructure and upgraded an airport. These developments, along with tourism, disturb the eco-system. However, proper regulations on the inflow of tourists as well as eco-friendly infrastructure can help in the preservation of the region. To what extent Russia or the other members will be able to protect the environment in the region because of the military and non-military activities such as tourism is doubtful, though protection of the environment features in their Arctic policies. Nonetheless, cooperation amongst the stakeholders will be more rewarding than competition.

CONCLUSION: THE NEED FOR COOPERATION

The United States and Russia share similar interests in safeguarding national interests, protecting the environment, managing the Arctic resources in a sustainable manner, development of the community, strengthening scientific research and building international cooperation on matters of the Arctic. Both countries have stressed on the centrality of the Arctic Council for dialogue and cooperation, and, to their credit, have ensured that the council functions without a break. The Arctic Council has evolved to become the most prominent forum for Arctic cooperation on safety, environment and other areas of mutual concern (excluding defence) for the eight Arctic countries and six indigenous people's organisations, and the observer states. Enduring cooperation in the Arctic is best understood when considering the conditions

in which humans—whether indigenous communities, merchant navy crew or members of the military or homeland forces—operate there. The Arctic is a remote region that is difficult to access, dangerous to navigate and arduous to exploit. Cooperation is much cheaper than competition. The challenges to the relatively few present in the region make working together a necessity.⁷⁰ While military cooperation has ended, following the changed status of Crimea, low-level security cooperation remains vital to the regional interests of the Arctic states. There have also been cooperation agreements on search and rescue, oil-spill preparedness and response. In addition, an agreement on research cooperation was entered into in May 2017.

There is also a growing recognition that the Arctic Council provides the United States and its allies with a platform to hold a dialogue with Russia. Having a safe space to engage with Russia in the context of a relationship that is otherwise fraught with tension is a rare and valuable asset. It is difficult to fathom a country's intent when it is closed to the rest of the world. The sort of diplomatic and political interactions that have been maintained in the Arctic area provide an opportunity to explore a closed region. The Arctic nations are not in what may be called Russia's near abroad. Russia does not have to fear losing its influence in the Arctic region as it is exercising influence through its inclusion in Arctic governance institutions. So far, Russia has benefited from the existing legal order in the Arctic and the UNCLOS, and stands to gain little, at this point, from upsetting that order. A dramatic Arctic thaw may fundamentally change this situation in the medium to long-term; there might be a "race for resources" in the Arctic though countries will be challenged by nature itself. As waterways remain treacherous to navigate and hydrocarbon reserves still prove difficult and hazardous to exploit, the Arctic environment, at least in one regard, has not changed: all Arctic nations, including Russia, stand to gain more from cooperation than competition.⁷¹ At the same time, militarisation of the region is also becoming unquestionable.

70. Stephanie Pezard and Abbie Tingstad, "Will the Arctic Remain a Warm Spot in Chilly U.S.-Russia Relations?", <https://www.rand.org/blog/2016/04/will-the-arctic-remain-a-warm-spot-in-chilly-us-russia.html>. Accessed on January 27, 2019.

71. Ibid.

The entry of non-Arctic states such as China⁷² and its claim in the region will open a new dimension of complications for the Arctic, including for Russia and the United States.⁷³

It is safe to say that Arctic cooperation would need Russia's continued cooperation within the region, and to the extent to which its actions continue to be seen as benign by the other states. It would also require the two nations to continue to engage with each other. The Arctic is home to the only shared US-Russian border, and strengthening communication channels and operational protocols is necessary to enforce laws, avoid conflict, and protect sovereignty in this region. Cooperation allows the United States and Russia to work towards developing technologies for the future. With increased competition for the natural resources of the Arctic, it is important for both the United States and Russia to build a policy of cooperation with each other. Regional collaboration between the Arctic states is essential for them to pursue their regional goals and ensure the prosperity of their Arctic populations. Perhaps, the Arctic's harsh environment offers hope for cooperation. As the Law of the Sea scholar Caitlyn Antrim observes, "It is easy to be friends when the elements are your common enemy."

72. China is bidding for the tender to build airports in Greenland, which has not gone down well with Denmark. There is fear within Denmark that if Greenland becomes independent, then China will have more influence over it.

73. It will open an avenue for both cooperation and conflict between Moscow and America. It will be an extension of their clash of interests in the Arctic.